1: Linton E-6 (1936-37) 1935 FYS Tanala FYS

organization is now breaking down and the following description applies to conditions among the Menabe fifty to seventy-five years ago. All the Tanala lived in villages of from fifty to eighty families. These villages were built in defensive positions, usually on hilltops, and were fortified by log palisades 10 to 12 feet high and often by deep ditches as well. There was always a ditch at the gate with a narrow bridge of earth leading to the entrance. The bridge was broken down if the villagers learned of an impending attack. In the center of the village there was an open space, long if the village was long and round if it was round, which was called the *hiswa*. Bordering on this there was a large house, called by some gentes the *trano lo*, by others the *lapa*. This was usually to the east of the *hiswa*, but might be to the north or south, never to the west. It was used as a residence by the village chief or the head of one of the lineages. The *hiswa* and *trano lo* were employed for assemblies of all sorts.

The village was divided into wards, each the property of a lineage. As a rule, each ward fronted on the *hiswa* and extended back to the palisade. The number of wards in a village was variable, ranging from two to ten or more. In general old villages showed the greatest number, due to the formation of new lineages through internal disputes. At least in theory, the land belonging to each lineage lay in the same direction in relation to the village that its ward occupied in relation to the *hiswa*. When a village moved, each lineage took up a ward and land in the same relative position at the new site. This arrangement was not correlated with differences in social rank or prestige, nor was one direction considered more desirable than another. The only explanation given by the Menabe was that this was an ancient custom.

There were certain things which belonged to the village as a whole. The *tepaway* was a charm or fetish concocted by an *ombiasy* at the time the village was founded. It was believed to protect the villagers from sickness, lightning, and the attacks of malevolent ghosts, but did not protect against enemies. It was buried inside a small stone enclosure in the *hiswa* (see Manufacture and Use of Charms). Although great importance was attached to it, it figured little, if at all, in the religious and ceremonial life of the villagers. The village sacred place, always outside the palisade and sometimes a mile or more away, was used for all the more important rites. Here the stones commemorating the dead were set up and the sacrifices made to the ancestors, without distinction of lineage. Each village also had its tomb or tombs, varying from one to three in number, which

S. Lemur 8-9 (1958-59) 1959 ??? Tanala ???

776 to the native mind and are never invoked alone. The Non-Human Spirits are minor Beings of little power, comparable to our own fairies and goblins. They are sometimes mischievous and terrifying, but are not taken seriously. The Spirits of the Dead take an active interest in the affairs of the living and constantly interfere to assist or injure. They are also partially dependent upon the living, their well being in the spirit world being increased by the sacrifices made to them. They are the objects of Tanala worship to the practical exclusion of all other Beings.

DEITIES

The native term for Deity is *Zoonhary* (*zo*, article, *onhary*, "creator"). As a noun the word is used to designate a powerful Being or class of Beings who have never been human. As an adjective it carries the significance of "divine," "supernatural" or simply "extraordinary." I have heard it used with little more weight than the English "wonderful."

The Menabe are vague as to the number of *Zoonhary*. Ordinary individuals uniformly say that there is only one. Priests and ombiasy hesitate when the question is put to them and I have seen two priests discuss it earnestly, citing passages from the rituals. All the longer invocations include a number of names of *Zoonhary* and the point at issue was whether these referred to different Beings or to forms or attributes of the same Being. All finally decided that there must be several *Zoonhary*, basing this on the use of certain plural grammatical forms, but it was plain that the question had not occurred to them until I brought it up.

The reason for this vagueness is that prayers and sacrifices are always addressed to *Zoonhary* and the ancestors jointly. The ancestors are all important and the *Zoonhary* invocation little more than a polite gesture. My priestly informants were doubtful whether *Zoonhary* ever interfered directly in ordinary human affairs. At the same time, as *Zoonhary* had made everything and had given power to the ancestors, they had to be mentioned in all rituals. However, *Zoonhary* are thought of as individuals, not simply as supernatural power. The concept has nothing of the impersonal, mechanistic quality of Mana.

776 177 [768 It seems almost certain that the *Zoonhary* were at one time more important in the native religion and more clearly individualized. The present monotheistic trend is due partly to contact with Christians and other monotheistic native groups and partly to a steady increase in the importance of ancestor worship.

L: Lemuel E-6 (1958-59) 1959 FYI Tanala FYI

At the present time the Menabe believe that the souls of their kings pass into *fossanas*, large snakes apparently of the boa family, but the belief has arisen in the last hundred years, in imitation of the Betsileo. The story told of its origin, if true, affords an interesting example of how such ideas may spread. Shortly after the death of King Rainiarivola a *fossana* came into the royal house at Ambohimanga and although it was put out several times it always returned. It was plainly a portent of some sort and the family called an *ombiasy* ("medicine-man") to see what it meant. He could get no answer from the *sikidy* ("divination") but said he thought the snake must want to tell them something. They called a second *ombiasy* with the same result. Then a man of the Betsileo tribe who was living at Ambohimanga said: "If that happened in our country we should know that it was the soul of a king returning. Perhaps it is so here, since you now have kings." At that time kingship was newly established among the Menabe under the overlordship of the Imerina. The people went through the Betsileo ritual, under his direction, and at the name of Rainiarivola the animal crawled upon the *lamba* spread out for it. After that the Tanala accepted the *fossana* belief and ceremony. Another visit of the same sort occurred just before the idols were burned at the order of the Imerina queen. 775 825

In ordinary practice the term *ombiasa* is applied only to the souls or doubles of the living. The *ombiasa* of the dead are called *angatra*, the difference between the two terms being very nearly the same as our own distinction between "soul" and "ghost." *Angatra* is also used as a general term for spirits, including minor Beings not of human origin as well as ghosts. 775

Angatra of human origin are divided into two classes, the *fahavalo* and the *zina*. The *fahavalo* are the *ombiasa* of deceased members of the gens. The term means literally "ninth," in reference to the ninth place in the arrangement of the *sikidy*, which is the place which represents the ancestors. The *fahavalo* supposedly are ever present and take an active interest in the affairs of their descendants, helping and punishing them. They are constantly invoked and sacrificed to and their worship is the core of the native religion. They may be invoked anywhere, but are thought to hear best and be most accessible at the village sacred place, where the memorial stones are erected. They appear to the living as ghosts, or in dreams. 769

The *zina* are the *ombiasa* of remote ancestors whose names and personalities have been forgotten, or of people who occupied a territory before the ancestors of the present inhabitants arrived. They

occupy definite localities, the *sivoara* already described, and do not interfere in human affairs except to punish trespass on their territory. They are never appealed to for aid and only receive sacrifices when their land is used, or when it is thought that an illness is due to trespass. They never appear to the living. Although the *zina* now play the rôle of local spirits, all informants agreed that they are of human origin.

DEATH AND BURIAL.

METHOD OF BURIAL CUSTOMS

The following account of death and burial among the Tanala *Ambohimanga* is given in the manuscript of Father Antoine: "If a person is sick enough to cause anxiety the members of the family assemble in the house where he is. If he dies the body is washed in cold water and after the bath the hair is brushed and oiled. The bathing and hairdressing are done by relatives of the same sex as the deceased. After the body has been wrapped in *lambas* [mantles] or mats it is carried to the *trano lo* [village assembly house] with the head uncovered. A piece of silver is put in the mouth and beads on the neck and hair. After this has been done the family sends for the relatives who live at a distance. The able-bodied men of the family go to the forest to make a *loko* [coffin], a tree trunk hollowed out and provided with four feet, in which to lay the body. One or two cattle are killed, according to the wealth of the family, and the meat distributed among the inhabitants of the village. Sometimes the messengers invite strangers to come to the feast and sometimes an ox is sent to the forest to be eaten by the workers there. When the *loko* is finished the men bring it to the village joyfully. The women and children go out to meet them and lead the way back also rejoicing. The *loko* is placed on the east side of the house, where the body is also laid. The next day the body is placed in it and it is closed with a made cover or plank bound on with vines. It is then hung up in the house. The length of time the body stays in the *trano lo* depends on the wealth of the family. Ordinarily it is carried to the *folosy* [place tomb] after two or three days, but if the family is rich it may hang there ten or fifteen days. During this time the family kills cattle, feasting the village and visitors and burning the fat in the *trano lo* to overpower the smell of the decaying body. If the body decomposes and matter drips from the coffin they take it out of the village and empty it, then bring it back. Before the cortege leaves for the *folosy* some people go ahead to prepare food for the

The bodies are laid in the tomb with the heads east, without coffins. Men and women are piled together indiscriminately unless the builder of the tomb has specified otherwise. Even chiefs are interred with the rest, although a few of the kings demanded individual tombs in imitation of the Imerina practice. Lepers and smallpox victims are excluded, but in some cases their bones seem to be put in after a few years of temporary interment in the ground. Sorcerers and other criminals are also excluded, their bodies being left for the dogs to eat. It is a universal rule that only members of the *gens* can be buried in the *folony*.

The tomb is transferred if the village is transferred or if a better site has been found. When the new tomb is ready, the day before the transfer, the two or three most important men of the village come to the tomb and call: "Hello, so-and-so and so-and-so," giving the names of all the important dead they know, "you are the great ones of the family here. Your tomb and residence here are bad. You know this and we know it too. We are going to transfer you tomorrow to such and such a place. Assemble all the family here, assemble the children and all your baggage, for tomorrow we will go there."

Next morning all the *Fokonolona* ("village council") come to the tomb and kill an ox to the east of it, i.e., by the heads of the dead. They spread out mats with raffia *lambas* ("mantles") on top. They then take out all the bodies and lay them on the lambas and tie them up into bundles. The bodies of wives and husbands are sewn up together, when known, all the children are put in one bundle and the oldest dead, who have fallen to pieces, in another. The bundles are then wrapped in mats and tied to carrying poles with vines. It is forbidden to use rope. A little of the sacrificed ox is grilled and eaten at the old tomb, but most of it is carried along for the feast at the new tomb. If it is a long trip a stop may be made and a meal cooked en route. On the way the people sing and play tricks on each other and sometimes wrestle. One trick is for the man on the rear end of the carrying pole to push suddenly and try to throw the front man down.

When they reach the new tomb all the bodies are put down outside. A special house has been built there and the people spend the night in this, singing and dancing. They feast that night and again the next morning, killing sometimes as many as ten oxen, depending on the wealth of the village. After breakfast they put the bodies in the new tomb. The body of the most important ancestor, except for his skull, is put at the bottom of the pit or box

1. Linton E-6 (1926-27) 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

and the others on top. Care is taken to have the heads of each sort behind those of the more important kind. Thus a child would be laid with its head extending only to its parent's throat. The skull of the most important ancestor is laid on top of all the bodies and is moved up at each new interment so that it will always be on top. 769

The Menabe seem to lack entirely the idea of a *Loky Kibory* ("guardian of the tomb") and no ceremonies are held at the *kibory* except at funerals or when it is transferred. In general it is taboo to cut wood or gather forest products in its vicinity and the place is shunned by everyone. Enemy people have been known to destroy the *kibory* if they held a special animosity, but this is rare.

RELICS OF DEAD CHIEFS

According to Sadaro Antoine the Ikongo have the practice of preserving relics of dead chiefs. A similar practice exists among the Sakalava. My Menabe informants had never heard of anything of the sort and I was unable to verify it for the Ikongo, but Sadaro's account is so circumstantial that I feel sure it exists. He says: "The *kenany*, which the Marohala also call *lambo kambo*, is a collection of the upper eye teeth of famous kings preserved in memory of their services. The *kenany* is made up of a series of crocodile teeth in which the canines are preserved. The crocodile teeth are attached side by side on a piece of cotton cloth bordered with silk called *kilambeny* or by mercerie. The whole is kept in the *kirakidrakitra*, a small covered basket of fine weave. This basket is usually kept on a small shelf above the eastern door of the house. Guardianship of the *kenany* is confined to a man of the Antimenga gens or to a king of the noble caste. It is forbidden for the guardian to eat black bananas or *lavalambo* bananas [two species]. It is also forbidden to raise guinea fowl or pigs in the village where the *kenany* is kept. 769 778

"The festival of *fampandrasana kenany* [bathing the *kenany*] is celebrated in the month *Volambita* [October] or *Asaramanitra* [December]. The bathing is done in a part of the river where the water seems to be asleep. For the Mananbondro gens the bathing place is *Antsimanindrano*, a place situated just above the confluence of the Mananbondro and Sakonjatsy rivers. Before the departure of the procession for the river the men enter the house where the *kenany* is kept. The women gather to the east of the house and sing. A man of noble caste approaches the place of honor, respectfully takes the basket, places it on his head, and then carefully deposits it 778 783 769

778 on a *sarivy* [finely woven mat] before the eastern door. A person of
788 either sex, but always of noble caste, carries the little basket on his
789 head to the river. The procession marches around the house three times singing. When the procession arrives at the river an ox is killed, *sora mamarika* [black and white] or *mainty loha* [black with white marks on the forehead]. The throat is cut at the edge of the river so that blood falls into the water. The *kimony* is taken from its basket and a man of the noble caste wears it as a bandoleer while swimming. While he crosses the river the rejoicing increases. The *drakitra* [a variety of drum] is beaten and the women chant in monotone. After a few minutes the swimmer returns to the edge of the river and puts the *kimony* back in its basket. After a feast all return to the village with rejoicing and the little basket is put back in its place.

"The *famenonona kimony* [feeding the *kimony*] may be held at any time. For this they kill an ox, always one of the previously mentioned colors. It is killed to the east of the *kimony's* house by a man of noble caste. After a prayer they take a part of each of the different sorts of meat [i.e., the parts used in sacrifice] which are cooked and eaten by the assistants. They then pull off the hump and salt it with *aira rasin* [sea salt]. When it has been salted it is fastened on top of the crocodile teeth with raffia and left for a minimum of three or a maximum of six days. At the end of this time it is eaten by the guardian. In case of a calamity, such as an epidemic of locusts, etc., the protection of the *kimony* is asked."

LOST BODIES

766 The loss of a body causes much grief to the relatives and every effort is made to recover it. The main causes of such loss are now death at a distance and drowning. In the first case the body is buried without ceremony and a year or more later, when the flesh has decayed, some of the male relatives dig it up and bring it home. A regular funeral is then held and the bones put in the *fasa* tomb. If the person has been drowned the core of a banana tree is taken and a silver bracelet put upon it. It is then thrown into the water near where the person disappeared and is believed to float along until it comes over the place where the body lies, when it stops and hesitates. The relatives then dive for the body.

If the body cannot be recovered the Ikongo hold a brief funeral over his sleeping mat and pillow, which are placed in the *fasa* ("grave tomb"), and later erect a stone in his honor. Among the Manandriana division of the Menabe the pillow and mat are not

At the present time their more pretentious memorials are of cut stone, Betsileo stone cutters being employed. Among the other gentes the memorial stones are almost uniformly rough or only slightly shaped. The largest Tanala menhir I saw was approximately 9 feet high, 3 feet wide at the base and 18 inches thick. The largest table was approximately 4 by 5 feet and 1 foot thick and raised 2 feet 6 inches above ground. The country of the Menabe is so broken and so heavily forested that the use of sledges for drawing the great stones is impossible. A large stretcher is made with two very long poles as thick as a man's leg and wooden crosspieces and on this the stone is lashed with vines. It is carried bodily by fifty or sixty men, others going ahead to cut a road. In a recent erection three hundred men assisted, carrying in shifts. When the menhir comes to the place of its erection a pit approximately the size of the base is dug and the stone laid beside it with the base overhanging. It is then levered up and blocked until it drops in. Then the base is tamped.

Memorial stones may be raised by the relatives of their own accord, or on the advice of an ombiasy, who tells them so-and-so desires a memorial, or by individuals in pursuance of a vow. The last method is the least frequent and such vows are only resorted to in times of great stress as when a beloved child lies at the point of death. The vow may be made anywhere, with or without witnesses, but is usually made publicly, in the hirana ("village square"). If one of the ancestors demands a vato lohy, either in a dream or through the medium of an ombiasy, the relatives will often ask for time, promising to erect it later, say after the next harvest.

There is no fixed time for the erection of the memorial stones. They may be raised at once, while the body still lies in the house, or several years later. If erected at once there is no sacrifice, as all sacrifices are forbidden while a dead body lies in the village, but an ox is killed as soon as it has been set up and the meat distributed. If the stone is raised some time after the death, one ox is sacrificed with the regular formula at the time that the cutting or transportation of the stone is begun, the priest praying that it may not break and that there may be no accidents. A second ox is sacrificed when it is set up. In either case the hump of the ox killed after its erection is rendered down and the stone painted with the grease, the natives using crude brushes made from the ravoro plant. Feasting and dancing continue while the stone is being transported and raised.

All the Menabe memorial stones are used as places of sacrifice, but they are never erected for the purpose of sacrificing to the gens

ancestors as a group. Each stone commemorates a single individual 769
who is invoked and sacrificed to there by his descendants. The 764
largest combined *vato lahy* and *vato vavy* in the village sacred place are, however, employed for sacrifices to the ancestors as a whole.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

PRAYER AND SACRIFICE

Prayer and sacrifice are inseparable in the native mind as all 769
dealings with the ancestral spirits are conducted strictly on a basis 782
of exchange. It is universally felt that prayer without sacrifice, or a promise to sacrifice, is useless. Moreover, the size of the sacrifice is, in general, proportional to that of the favor asked. An important request requires a large offering while a small one is enough for a small matter.

Tanala sacrifices fall into two classes: those addressed to the gods and ancestral spirits as a whole and those addressed to the spirits of individuals. The former are performed by priests or family heads and are public, the whole village, lineage, or family participating. They constitute a reaffirmation of the close bond existing between the ancestors as a whole and their descendants as a whole. The latter are performed by individuals and indicate that a relation has been established between one of the dead and one of the living. Sacrifices of this sort are usually small and are not felt to be of public interest, although anyone who wishes to may attend.

SACRIFICES TO THE ANCESTORS AS A WHOLE

Sacrifices to the ancestors as a whole fall into two classes: sacrifices performed in behalf of the whole community and sacrifices performed in behalf of individuals. The former are resorted to only in time of general calamity or to insure success in some communal undertaking, such as a war party. They are relatively infrequent. The latter are performed whenever an individual feels the need of supernatural assistance. Illness is the main cause and the one mentioned first by all informants, but such sacrifices also are made for success in business enterprises, safe return from journeys, or safe return from a war expedition.

PRIESTS.—All important sacrifices to the ancestors as a whole 793
are performed by professional priests. Less important ones are 769
made by heads of families. The priesthood seems to have been a direct outgrowth of the sacrificial functions of heads of families.

I: Linton S-5 (1926-27) 1933 FTS Tanala FTS

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According to native belief each gens has arisen through the expansion of a single family (see Social Organization) which increased to a lineage, then to a village, and finally to a series of villages. At first the head of the family sacrificed to the ancestors, then, as the related group grew larger, the office became more formal and was vested in the head of the family which was in most direct line of descent from the gens ancestor, reckoning through eldest children. Finally through various causes such as settlement of part of the group at a distance, failure of the direct line, etc., the strict succession was broken down.

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Among the Menabe at the present time every village of long standing has its priest. When a new village is founded, the priest of the parent village is expected to come to it on request and make sacrifices there. Finally, when the new village has existed for two or three generations and lost its feeling of unity with the old village, or when the priest becomes weary of making the necessary journeys, the head of the ranking family in the new village asks permission from the original priest to assume the priestly office. This then becomes hereditary in his family. There seems to be no formal investiture for a new priest, but the office cannot be assumed without the original priest's permission. In the *Zafindriantsova* gens the priest of the parent village is called the *Tena Pitsokasomanga*, those of the offshoot villages simply *Pitsokasomanga*. The *Tena Pitsokasomanga* officiate at sacrifices in his own village and at those performed in behalf of the group of villages as a whole. The *Pitsokasomanga* are considered his deputies and ask his permission when they are to perform the more important sacrifices. Most of the Menabe gentes seem to have a similar, but rather less formal organization. In general, the priest of the parent village has no real control over the priests of the younger villages and there is no central religious authority, even within the gens.

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Although the priestly office remains in the family of the original priest of a village, the exact method of inheritance varies somewhat with the gens. Among the *Zafindramasoa* the priests are always men. The office passes, at the death of a priest, to his younger brother and thus through the whole line of brothers. At the death of the last it reverts to the eldest son of the original priest, his brothers' children being debarred even if their fathers have held the office. If the eldest child of the original priest is a girl, the office, after it has been held by her brothers in succession, reverts to her children.

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793 All priests are subject to certain *fody* ("prohibitions" or "rules of conduct") which usually extend to their families as well. The commonest of these seems to be a prohibition on eating pork.

791 OMBIASY AND THE ANCESTOR CULT.—Native medicine-men or magicians, called *ombiasy*, have been described elsewhere (see section on *Ombiasy*) and only their activities in connection with the ancestor cult will be described here. They are practitioners of divination and magic and are sharply distinguished from the priests, who do not work with either. Throughout most of Madagascar the same person may not hold both offices and if an *ombiasy* inherits a priesthood, he must give up his magical paraphernalia and practices at once. At the same time, there is no hostility between the two groups and they are not considered rivals. The *ombiasy* are thought to be more skilled than the priests in everything pertaining to the supernatural and the priests constantly consult them as to the best means for propitiating the ancestors.

791 *Ombiasy* frequently instigate sacrifices, announcing that illness
• 769 or calamity is due to offended ancestral spirits, or that the spirit
796 of so-and-so has appeared to them and demanded an offering from some one of his descendants. They are always consulted as to the most propitious time and place for communal sacrifices and for individual sacrifices as well, if the sacrificer is rich enough to pay for their services. Among the Tanala they also act as stage managers in the more important sacrifices. This results in great variation in minor details of ceremonial procedure for, although the general pattern is always the same, the *ombiasy* is expected to change some detail each time. If he fails to do this, there seems to be a feeling of disappointment and a tendency to doubt his ability. In general, only *ombiasy* belonging to the *gens* are allowed to manage sacrifices, for outsiders will not be familiar with the usual ritual of the group, or with the names of its ancestors. However, if a foreign *ombiasy* of great reputation is present, he may be asked to take charge. He consults with the priest and, when the time comes to say the invocation, stands beside him and repeats the invocation with him, the priest speaking in a low voice and the *ombiasy* in a loud one. Minor priests, or those who feel uncertain of their own ability, may delegate their office to the *ombiasy* of their village, who thenceforth both direct and perform all sacrifices. The arrangement is temporary and the office reverts to the priest's family at his death.

The Tanala appear to be the only tribe in which it is permissible for an *ombiasy* to sacrifice to the ancestors, except in his own behalf

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or for his immediate family. The Imerina may have been an exception to this rule, but accounts of the early conditions there are vague and conflicting. Elsewhere, priests cannot delegate their functions to *ombiasy* even temporarily. Among the western tribes, where the distinction between the two offices is most rigid, *ombiasy* may not even direct sacrifices.

SACRIFICES ON BEHALF OF THE GENS.—Among the Menabe, sacrifices on behalf of the entire gens were made only in time of national calamity, such as pestilence, very serious crop failure, or an attack which threatened to drive the gens from its territory or subjugate it. They were performed on the tops of sacred mountains, the idea being that the worshippers were thus lifted closer to heaven and their prayers made more easily audible to the gods and ancestors. Each gens had one or more of these mountains within its territory. The Zafiakotry had three, which were the sites of three of their ancient villages, later abandoned. I could not learn whether the sacred mountains of other gentes had ever been inhabited. At present it is not taboo to visit the mountains or even to cultivate their lower slopes, but the summits are shunned as the abode of spirits. These high places are not marked by memorial stones or other permanent altars. A temporary wooden altar (see Sacrifices on Behalf of Individuals) was erected for the ceremony.

When there was more than one sacred mountain, the leading *ombiasy* of the gens, or some foreign *ombiasy* of great power, indicated which one should be used. He also selected the priest who was to officiate from among all those in the gens and indicated the ritual to be used, especially whether the sacrifice was to be boiled or grilled. The ritual was the same as for individual sacrifices. Apparently no sacrifices on behalf of a gens have been performed in recent times.

Sacrifices on behalf of a village or group of villages were performed before setting out on a war party. These have been described in the section on Warfare. They may have been performed on a few other occasions as well, but informants were uncertain. Since the establishment of French control they also have become obsolete.

SACRIFICES ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUALS.—Sacrifices of this type are the commonest of all Tanala ceremonies. Although they are always made on behalf of some individual, the larger and more important ones are participated in by the entire village and are felt to be a reassertion of the close relation existing between the living and the souls of their ancestors. They may be performed during

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on the golden seats, from which you watch us to give us life." There is then a pause of two or three minutes to allow the gods to depart. 782 793

When the gods have gone, the priest calls out: "We call you equally, oh ancestors [calling by their life names all the ancestors he knows and also naming five or six tombs where the bodies of ancestors are or have been buried], for it is you who have brought us into the world, exalted ones. You have gone where you are changed into *Zanahary*. So-and-so is sick and the *ombiasy* has found by divination that you demand an ox. Observe there the sacrificial parts [names of these repeated]. Eat well in our presence and cure this sick person thoroughly. Free him of all his pains. If some one of you, oh ancestors, is sick and therefore absent, take him part of the food." The ancestors are allowed about twenty minutes to eat and then the priest dismisses them. 782 793 769

When the priest finishes speaking, the small boys, six to eight years old, scramble for the grilled meat and each one can eat the piece he gets. This meat is simply the scraps left by the gods and ancestors. After this the whole company feasts on the boiled meat and rice or, if no feast has been prepared, the meat of the ox is divided and all disperse. The lungs are given to the priest. 782 793

In the *asroua* ceremony of this gens the ox is killed either at the sacred place or in the village. The sacred parts are put to cook in a new earthen pot and rice is boiled in another. While it is cooking the rest of the animal is divided and those who have both parents living can cook and begin to eat their share at once. Orphans, on the other hand, can not take their share of the meat until the sacrifice has been made. When the food is cooked, a wooden bowl is partly filled with rice, with a heap of boiled meat on top. This is taken to the place of sacrifice and laid on the altar. The person in whose behalf the sacrifice is made seats himself to the west of the altar, facing it, and the priest stands behind him, also facing it. The priest arranges the *hasamanga*, as already described, and repeats the following invocation: "Listen, listen, we call you *Zanahary*, *Zanahary* male and female, Fangidana, Beruzavona, Rantimoa, the sun, Andrangafalafa, Madiovaonkoho, the moon, the stars, water, earth, and the twelve mountains." He then explains the reason for the sacrifice, ending with: "Here are pieces of all the parts of the ox. Eat them and bless us." After a few minutes' silence he says: "The gods do not take long to eat. You have now eaten. Return to your place in the sky by the golden chain and sleep in the sky. From there send us blessings and give us life."

782 When the gods have gone, the priest calls the ancestors, first
• 769 calling by their life names: all the ancestors of the person giving the
793 sacrifice, then all the known ancestors of the village and gens, and lastly giving a general invitation to all souls between the sea and *Ampetsena* (the mountains which form the western boundary of the Tanala territory). He explains the reason for the sacrifice and asks them to eat, using the same formula as for the gods. About twenty minutes of silence follow, then he tells them to return to their place as the family is about to eat. After this everyone feasts, eating even the food from the altar.

782 Apparently the differences between the two invocations are not
769 directly connected with the form of the ceremony. The form is varied to suit the sacrifice, on the advice of the ordeal.

In most of the other Merina gens the procedure for the *tsiroko* is practically the same as that given. The *sorona*, on the other hand, is rather more elaborate. The ox is killed at the place of sacrifice and its meat boiled in a new pot on a special fire to the west of the altar. The invocations do not begin until the offering has been arranged on the altar. Rice is boiled at the same time as the meat, but on a different fire. When both are done, the rice is ladled out with a very large wooden spoon (Fig. 28, a). Seven piles of rice are made on the altar at equal intervals, each pile containing three spoonfuls. Three piles are arranged across the back of the altar, three across its center, and one in front. A hollow is made in the top of each pile with the sacrificial ladle, and this is filled with meat and broth. The three piles at the rear of the altar are for the ancestors of highest rank, the three center piles for ordinary ancestors, and the single pile for the souls of reform ancestors. If the altar is small only four piles are made, three in the rear for important ancestors and one in front for all other ghosts.

782 In the Mananchiana gens the procedure for the *sorona* is as
769 follows: The sacrificer and his family stand or sit to the west of the
793 altar with the priest standing in front. The priest arranges the *hasonanga* as described. He then makes the following invocation: "Listen, listen, *Zanahary* male, *Andriolotsy*, *Vavambetsivavana*, *Andrandalala*, and *Mediovanankoho*. You are called because so-and-so is sick for because he has made a vow, repeating vow and circumstances]. Because of this we give you a sacrifice." After a few minutes of silence the priest says: "The *Zanahary* do not ask much time to eat. Return to your place, mounting by the chain of gold and the rope of silver. Return to the place in the sky where

you live, for we are going to call the ancestors also." One priest explained the reference to the gold chain and silver rope by saying that, as the sky was high, the gods must have some means of going up and down and, since they were gods, everything belonging to them would be of precious metal. 769 782 793

After the gods have been sent back the priest calls the ancestors of the person sacrificing by name, but not the ancestors in collateral lines. He explains the reason for the sacrifice and invites them to eat. The whole company then keeps silence for about half an hour. At the end of this the priest says: "We called you because [again reciting reason]. Now that you have eaten, return to your place, for we are going to eat in our turn." The relatives then eat all the rice and meat which has been cooked, including most of the sacrifice. If the ombiasy has advised the offering of rum, a little of it is placed in a bamboo which is planted in the ground to the east of the altar. The rest is drunk. At the close of the ceremony it is customary to leave a little meat and rice on the altar, but the priest takes the meat which has lain under the sacrifice. This, with the heart of the ox and 1.25 francs in money, constitutes his pay for performing the ceremony. The ombiasy who has directed it receives the head and right fore foot as his pay.

The Zafiakotry, one of the subdivisions of the Mananadriana, had a slightly different method of arranging the seven offering. This group originally used only upright memorial stones about as tall as a man. When the offering was ready, equal portions were put in two wooden bowls. One of these was placed on top of the stone, the other on the ground. The lower one was set on a new mat to the east of the stone. The bowl on the stone was for the gods, that on the ground for the ancestors. The tsenako rite was never performed at the sacred stones. If performed in the village, both the seven and tsenako were usually held indoors, either in the house of the person in whose behalf the offering was made, or in the trano be ("public house of the village"), if the sacrifice belonged to the same lineage as the village chief. At present they use stone tables, but continue to make the bulk of their sacrifices indoors.

The invocation and general procedure was the same as for the rest of the Mananadriana. My informant for this group, who was himself a priest, told me that he had been interested in the attributes of the gods named in the invocation and had tried to learn something about them from the other priests and from old people. No one

369 could tell him anything and he concluded that they must be members
782 of *Zoonhary loky's* (*Zoonhary* the male's) family.

793 In the Zafindrianarova one stone tables are employed for sacrifices at the sacred place, but all but the most important offerings are made in the dwelling of the village priest, or in that of the person responsible for the offering. The ox is killed to the east of the house and the meat and rice cooked on the regular fireplace. In the arovas rite a mat is laid on the floor in the sacred northeast corner of the house, with a covering of Traveler's Palm leaves. Six piles of rice and meat are made on this in two rows, as on the altar. Southwest of this leaves are laid, but no mat, and a single pile is made for the *ndevo* and strange ghosts.

The sacrificer scrapes the *hasonoge* only three times, with the usual counting and invocation. He then addresses the spirits as follows: "Tambatsimaro. Antsinanarana iry rezana. Mangaliy anao, *Zoonhary*; *Zoonhary loky*, *Zoonhary vavy*, Rangitsina, Andrianantsimaro, Maderasantsoha, Ikerangarango, Vatsabetsivazana, Andrasoloiaka, Avia fahasafara. Mandrarango anay tady volomena nipetraka anivay farafara vola." "Hail [or salute] to the East. In the East there are many ancestors. You are being called *Zoonhary male*, *Zoonhary* female, etc. Come for we wish to offer you a sacrifice. Dressed by the golden cord and sit upon the bed of silver." The reason of the sacrifice is then explained and the gods invited to eat. After a short pause the ancestors are called and allowed about twenty minutes to eat, after which the gods and ancestors are sent back together. The priest who was my informant for this gave had also made inquiries as to the nature of the gods, but could learn nothing.

793 In all the genius the less important sacrifices are made by the
796 head of the family in the sacred northeast corner of the house. Most
749 of the genius use a small hanging altar which is almost identical with the frames used for smoking fish (Fig. 3, c). This is covered with a mat and leaves, but usually only one pile of food is made. The head of the house invokes *Zoonhary* and the ancestors simultaneously, repeating no individual names, and the whole procedure is rather informal. The frequency of small family sacrifices varies with the customs of the group and the piety of the individual. Many families make an offering at every meal, placing a few grains of rice on the altar or simply throwing a little of the food toward the east.

178 No rituals or eyewitness accounts of sacrifices among the Tanala
782 Ikongo were obtained. Apparently there are no village sacred places.

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Their memorial stones are erected anywhere and are not used for sacrifices to the ancestors as a whole. Many of their sacrifices are made at pointed wooden posts, about 5 feet high and 3 inches in diameter. Numbers of these posts are to be seen in their villages. In some cases each family has one or more, erected to the east of the dwelling. Apparently both the *mamoko* and *sorona* rites are employed, but I was unable to learn whether temporary altars were built, how the offerings were arranged, etc. The sacrifices are performed by hereditary priests under the direction of *ombiasy*, as among the Menabe. 779 782

SACRIFICES TO INDIVIDUAL SPIRITS

Sacrifices to individual spirits seem to be fairly common among the Menabe, although they are of less importance than those made to the ancestors as a whole. Apparently the Ikongo have similar ideas and practices, but no exact information could be obtained. The Menabe honor both ancestral and non-ancestral spirits. 782 749

Sacrifices to individual ancestors may be made because the ghost has demanded them, to placate a malicious or offended ghost, or in fulfillment of a vow. In general, the appearance of an ancestor in a dream or vision is interpreted as a demand for a sacrifice. If the apparition has not made its wishes known, the person who has seen it will consult an *ombiasy* as to the sort of sacrifice required, the proper place, etc. *Ombiasy* are believed to be in close touch with the ancestral spirits, who visit them from time to time and, through them, demand sacrifices from specified descendants. After such a visit, the *ombiasy* notifies the victim, who is bound to comply with the demand, under penalty of sickness or other misfortune. Persons killed in this way often grumble and may even ask the ghost for a postponement, but they do not seem to doubt the genuineness of the communication. The belief offers a good opportunity for blackmail and one informant remarked cynically that it seemed to be only the ancestors of the rich who demanded sacrifices through *ombiasy*. The *ombiasy* may also decide, by divination, that an illness, or persistent ill fortune, is due to the malevolent activity of a special ghost and advise that a sacrifice be made to placate it. 782 749 787 (191)

Vows to individual ancestors are uncommon in time of sudden danger. They arise from a feeling that a close relative, as a father or grandfather, will be more attentive and helpful than the ancestors as a whole. The greatest vow is that to erect a memorial stone, because of the expense involved. Informants know only one instance of such a promise. Commonly an ox is vowed. 782 749

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If the ancestor to whom the sacrifice is made has a memorial stone the sacrifice will normally be made there. The fat of the ox may be rendered down and smeared on the stone, but the Menabe seem to regard this as an innovation. If there is no stone, the embassy is consulted for the most propitious place. The southern gentes of the Menabe have, in addition to memorial stones, wooden posts which are set up in their villages. These are called *soto lahy* hoso (lit. "wooden memorial stones") or *tron*. They are erected for sacrifices to individual ancestors, although two or three ancestors may be commemorated by a single post. The posts are the property of individual families and are usually planted east of the dwelling.

[193] If an ox is sacrificed, the regular priest is employed and the ritual, except for the invocation, is identical with that used for sacrifices to the ancestors as a whole. In the invocation the priest calls first on *Zanahary*, then on the ancestor who is being honored, and lastly on the other ancestors. If the offering is like than an ox, the sacrifice is performed by the person himself and only *Zanahary* and the special ancestor are invoked.

Sacrifices to non-ancestral spirits are of two sorts, those made in acknowledgment of their claim to certain localities and those made to obtain their help. If a man desires to cultivate a patch of land on which there is a memorial stone, he must first sacrifice an ox to the individual whom it commemorates.

Sacrifices to obtain help are based on the belief that certain souls are possessed of more than ordinary power. An old man or woman will frequently announce that he or she will answer prayers after death. The promise is made repeatedly and publicly and there appears to be a set formula, ending with the person, "I will do this if what the ancestors [or the embassy] have said is true." In the promise the person specifies what shall be offered to him. One old woman requested snuff of a special kind and an old man sweetpotatoes and sugarcane, vegetables of which he was especially fond. In nearly all cases the promise is to respond to prayers for a single purpose, as success in business, safe return from journeys, offspring, etc.

After the death of the person a memorial stone is erected to him and anyone, related or not, may repair to it to vow and pray to him. If the first few requests are not granted, the people conclude that the ghost lacks power and pay no more attention to it. If, on the other hand, the prayers are granted, a regular cult may develop, and the worship may continue for several generations.

It is thought that the souls of such persons reside in their memorial stones. The supplicant approaches the stone and slaps it several times with his open hand, to awaken the spirit. If he does this properly, his request is sure to be granted. He then says: "Listen, listen, so-and-so. I am going on a journey [giving details of his route, etc.]. If I come back safe and the trip is a success, I will bring here and sacrifice to you so much honey [or snuff, rum, etc.]." When the prayer has been granted, the vower makes the offering himself, with no ceremony except a second awakening of the spirit and a brief announcement.

OMBIASY

The term *ombiasy* signifies a medicine-man or magician. The Merahe recognize two main classes, *ombiasy mananpotra* and *ombiasy mpanidity*. The latter are divided into *ombiasy ndolo* and *ombiasy akazo*. All the types of *ombiasy* include both men and women. Men are more numerous, but some of the most famous are women.

The *ombiasy mananpotra* are spiritualist mediums. They are usually marked by some slight mental or nervous abnormality. No special training is required and they begin practicing as soon as they become conscious of their powers. Their main activity is the discovery of the cause of illness and the means for curing it. Informants thought that they might be appealed to in other matters, but could give no instances.

Seances are held in the *ombiasy's* house, always at night. The *ombiasy* spreads a mat in the northeast corner of the house, placing on it a bottle of rum and certain charms. He sits beside it or lies on it. Sometimes both *ombiasy* and mat are covered with a tent-like mosquito net of raffia cloth. This tent is about 5 feet high and comes down to the floor, giving complete concealment. The sick person and his relatives seat themselves on the floor, apparently without any fixed order, and the fire and all lights are extinguished. The people begin clapping and singing softly. After a time a knocking is heard on the walls, or voices are heard repeating: "We have come. We have come." There are sometimes as many as ten or twelve spirits, distinguishable by their different voices. The voices are nasal and seem to come from the east or west of the *ombiasy*, sometimes high, sometimes low, but never far from him. The head of the family, or the sick person, then tells the spirits why they have been called. After this the *ombiasy* explains the situation fully and